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THROSSEL HOLE PRIORY

THROSSEL HOLE PRIORY is a training monastery and retreat centre following the Soto Zen Buddhist tradition. The Priory is affiliated with Shasta Abbey whose Spiritual Director is Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett, M.O.B.C. Shasta Abbey is the headquarters of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives of the Soto Zen Church and is located in Mount Shasta, California. The monks of Throssel Hole Priory are members of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives and follow the teaching and example of Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett.

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THE JOURNAL OF THROSSEL HOLE PRIORY is published as a service to all those who are seriously interested in the practice of Buddhism. Through the Journal, members and friends of the Priory are able to share their experience and understanding of Buddhist training. Opinions expressed in each article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Abbot, the Editor, or Throssel Hole Priory. The Journal is published quarterly and costs £6.00 p.a.

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News from the Tiger's Lair



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On Beginning with the Answer.

The traditional idea of marriage in the far east is that it should be arranged. There is much discussion concerning suitability of character and background and then the two young people are brought together; if they like each other the marriage takes place. This, of course, is totally contrary to ideas of marriage in the west where two young people marry when they fall in love. When I asked about this, when in Sojiji, I was told that the west puts two hot kettles on a stove that is already cooling or which is, in fact, already cold whilst the east puts two cold kettles on a stove that is already hot. I thought about this for a long time and then realised that marital decisions in the orient were made out of faith whereas marital decisions in the west were made out of

* This is a phrase borrowed from one of the Judge Dee books by Robert Van Gulik; I have forgotten which book.

hope. Oriental people have the faith that the potential for true love and marriage exists within everyone, the fact that they are not necessarily physically head over heels in love notwithstanding, physical and sexual attraction not being the basis on which to build a marriage. Western people hope that a couple's love will last but a lasting marriage takes much more than physical and sexual attraction; these things can wane with time. Hope is no substitute for faith. I am not advocating arranged marriages; I am trying to point out a fundamental difference in approach to important matters between east and west. The east looks to the long-term situation of the couple, knowing full well that the chemistry of physical attraction will take care of itself. The west relies far too much on physical attraction and does not pay enough attention to the long-term situation.

It may not look like it with this as a beginning but this is an article concerning koans and if ever there was a koan marriage is one. I can remember, when I first arrived in Sojiji, being asked what I had learned concerning Buddhism, and Zen in particular, when in England and I talked about the Precepts, the Scriptures and many other things and wondered why I was being smiled at indulgently; one of the monks, questioning me, said, "But all of the morality of which you speak is taught in childhood and understood. True religion begins where morality ends." I said, "Yet you say that Preceptual Truth is what matters," and he answered, "Preceptual Truth is not anywhere near as shallow as morality and yet morality is the outer, visible sign of Preceptual Truth; therefore, when one is giving forth the outward sign and the Precepts have become one's blood and bones, one does not need to speak of morality for one has gone far beyond it. Too many people use morality as a bridle or curb on moral behaviour; when it is used thus there is no true, religious understanding."

At the time there was a young American staying in the temple who wished to study koans and who regarded them very much as a species of conundrum to be

discussed and meditated upon in what I now realise to be a highly intellectual way. The same monk who had spoken before, when I asked him about a koan for me, said, "You have already been given some understanding of koans when I spoke to you of morality. He who truly understands the matters we discussed then will not make the mistake of thinking that koans need to be contrived, as in Rinzai, or are an intellectual game." I said, "Many people think that Zen, because of its koans, has nothing to do with Buddhism and is not even a religion. I have a feeling, I don't know why, that this is somehow bound up in what we are speaking of," and he answered, "Be careful of your intelligence; you have a very important clue." I sat with this for a long time; in fact, had I known, I had clues all around me. On another occasion when I spoke to the same monk he said, "You already have the answer to the koan in the fact that you crossed the great seas and came here," and I sat with this for a long time too.

What I am trying to say here goes to the heart of the fundamental difference in outlook of east and west. The east has faith that a marriage can and will last; the west has hope. It is automatically presumed, if one crosses the great seas and sits in the meditation hall, that one has faith; after all, why else would one come? It is never asked if one has faith; the fact that one comes presumes that it exists. In western religions you are asked if you have faith; in Buddhism it is presumed that you would not have come if you had no faith. No one would sit down with what appears to be a meaningless conundrum like the sound of one hand clapping unless one had faith that there was, indeed, an answer. To try and answer it from an intellectual point of view is impossible. The faith itself is the answer; the faith that one is actually sitting there asking the question presumes there to be an answer and it is when that faith is all that exists that the certainty comes and one can throw the book of koans in the air for it is the certainty born of faith that is the answer to every koan, words being superfluous.

Out of their kindness the great masters gave us every simple koans at times. On one occasion someone asked the master, "In my house there is a stone Buddha that sits up and lies down. Can it find true enlightenment?" and the master said, "Yes, it can;" and when the person said, "Can it not find true enlightenment?" the master said, "No it can't." The uncertainty has to be born of one's own faith; one cannot rely on the faith of others.

Faith has to be found within oneself and it is, indeed, presumed to be there when one arrives at the monastery or one would not have journeyed. Thus Shakyamuni Buddha was already half-enlightened when he left home. The fact that Zen does not make a great show externally of what frequently passes for faith, which is really hope, in the west, makes Zen into a truly intuitive religion and far superior to the sort of religion that most people frequently think is religion. It is very important to differentiate clearly between faith and hope. Hope can be disappointed; faith can never be disappointed for faith is rooted in that which we know to be True within ourselves; hope is only a charming wish. The answer to all koans, coming out of faith, means that we already have the answer and, if we begin with that answer, which is faith in our own innate Buddhahood, any answer will do when the certainty is manifested by us.

To believe in something is not the same as to have faith in it. One can be disappointed with belief but nothing whatsoever can shake faith, thus the master can ask the most ridiculous question of his disciple and have that disciple know, through faith, that in the Eternal Buddha Nature all vanishes. It is this understanding of faith that makes Zen the essence of True Religion.

Belief in a saviour is a duality since it implies the opposites of the Saviour having the Buddha Nature and the believer not having it: in Buddhism all are equal in the Buddha Nature, including the Buddha

Shakyamuni. Faith has to be pure to itself; one can ask, faith in what? The answer is - just faith.

Beware of Old Influences.

In recent months we have witnessed the unhappy spectacle of T.V. Christian evangelists being pilloried by the media for their behaviour and actions. This article will in no way discuss the rightness or wrongness of their behaviour, what it will discuss are the actions and reactions of their congregations, the media and the public in general. What has led me to write this was the disturbing realisation that whether one of these unfortunate people brazened it out by covering his or her doings, or confessed them openly, the result was the same: in both cases there was condemnation on the part of the religious authorities, a falling away of congregation members and a cynical portrayal of the situation by the media as well as a total exploitation of the repentance, the grief and, at least to my mind, genuine sorrow of these persons from a cynical point of view.

I am in no way implying that Zen Masters, Roshis and the like do not break the Precepts and, if they do, I am not implying that they should get away with it: they do break the Precepts and a number of us know it, but there must be a big difference in the way in which a Buddhist reacts to such behaviour and the way in which members of other religions do. Buddhism fortunately does not require "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," such thinking being totally vindictive. However, in watching what has happened to these unfortunate people (and I am in no way condoning their alleged actions), one has to wonder what happened to Christian charity which says that there is forgiveness for sin. One has to wonder why it is that, if their God is willing to forgive them, their congregations cannot at least attempt to emulate him by doing the same. From what I have seen, whether they repented openly and shed tears or whether they covered up their actions, the result was the same - punishment

and condemnation. I cannot see how this can encourage anyone to confess their faults openly, nor can I see any genuine attempt to follow the spirit of the teachings of Christianity. One can hardly be surprised, whilst deploring the fact, that persons who may have fallen somewhat short of what they preach have attempted to cover up their shortcomings.

There is an interesting parallel in the teachings of Buddhism, Judaism and Christianity: the words of the old King James Bible say, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord;" Buddhism clearly teaches that karma is inexorable and, this being so, it is for us to get on with our own training and not to condemn and, above all, not to pillory others who may have fallen short of their promises to keep the Precepts. We have to be very careful, those of us who have come out of a Judeo-Christian background, that we do not allow our former beliefs to destroy the beauty and delicacy of our Buddhist faith by backsliding into old ideas of vengeance as a result of imagined anger and hurt. In the deepest sense of religion, only feeling reaps the karmic consequence and there is nothing real from the very first that can feel the pain, therefore, if we react according to our old understandings of desiring vengeance for what a teacher or Zen Master may or may not have done, all we are proving to the world is that we have not understood Buddhism the purpose of which was, from the beginning, to teach us to be free of self. One can only be truly free of self if one understands that, whatever a person has done, he or she will take the karmic consequence thereof and it is no business of ours to in any way judge their actions. It is hoped that one day the law will find a way of dealing humanely with malefactors from a truly Buddhist point of view. Obviously, rapists and murderers and the like have to be segregated from the community; I am not advocating that people go off and do nothing whatsoever about keeping the world safe from crime. Obviously, persons who are so unfortunate in their spiritual understanding that they commit such crimes have to be placed where they can do no harm to others. This world is not an ideal place and always

being able to act and react from a purely Buddhist point of view is not possible; however, we must understand that we harm ourselves very seriously when we act or react from a judicial (i.e. selfish) point of view with regard to the sexual behaviour, drunkenness and greed for possessions of others; it is also unrealistic to expect our teachers and Zen Masters to be absolute paragons of virtue.

I can remember a story being told me concerning the late Roshi Suzuki of San Francisco who, perhaps from illness, was, on a number of occasions, late for morning service: one of his disciples proceeded to be late also. Roshi Suzuki called this person in and told him to remove his robes since he was unfit to be a monk. When the person concerned started to do so, Roshi Suzuki asked him what he thought he was doing. The person was very confused. Roshi Suzuki then took him into the lecture hall and delivered a talk on learning from one's master and not copying his mistakes. Obviously, anyone who behaves thus with a Zen Master is suffering from plebeian thought. It is imperative to remember that Zen Masters, evangelists and priests of all sorts are the representatives of their teachings because they have studied them and it is hoped that they will definitely attempt to exemplify them at all times. However it must be remembered that they are flesh and blood, human; they are not gods or, necessarily, saints. We as humans tend to tear down our gods and our totem poles when they do not behave according to our concept of what they teach. In the fifth chapter of the Shushogi Dogen says, "When you meet a Zen Master who teaches the Truth do not consider his caste, his appearance, shortcomings or behaviour. Bow before him out of respect for his great wisdom and do nothing whatsoever to worry him." I can remember a very fine young monk, when I was in Sojiji, who, whenever criticisms of others and discussions of others came up, would vanish into deep meditation no matter where he happened to be sitting and, when the criticisms, etcetera, were over, would return to joining the conversations. This is, the

ideal behaviour under such circumstances of one who is truly attempting to follow the Way.

I realise that what I have said may raise a lot of questions in persons' minds, however the most important thing, as I said in the previous article, is faith and all such things as I have been speaking of here can try one's faith terribly. Since the actions and behaviour of others do not concern the real us, it is very unwise to allow our faith to be whittled away at by cynicism, anger and imagined hurt which can only destroy our peace of mind and delay our finding the Truth. The law of karma, as I said, is inexorable; it does not need any help from us. I can remember Christmas Humphries in London, many years ago, turning to Daisetz Suzuki on the platform of Caxton Hall and saying, "Isn't it wonderful for us to have this good man here?" Daisetz Suzuki, who had been, I think, dozing on the platform (which was not surprising considering how boring some of the speeches were), opened an eye and said, with a big grin, "I am not good."

A Zen Master knows the Right Way because he completely understands the Precepts and can teach them, as I said in the last issue of this Journal, therefore, in that sense, he or she is far superior to his or her disciples; however, he or she is human and occasionally will make a mistake with regard to Preceptual teaching. He or she will also pick themselves up and go on.

It is important to remember that Zen Masters are bound by the law of karma: what has caused most of the problems for Zen Buddhists in recent years has been that they have suffered from the idea that, as a result of kensho and being a Roshi, one is free of karma: this can only lead to the devilish belief that "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law." It must be understood that this is utterly wrong; a Zen Master is bound by karma and he or she does take the karmic consequence of all of his or her actions, if not now, later on. We must learn not to condemn

because something does not measure up to "our" standards; there is no "you" to have standards other than those of the Precepts which you yourself are doing everything to follow.: the training of others is not your business. Roshi Suzuki gave some excellent teaching to his disciple: one must learn from one's teachers and not copy their mistakes.

* * *

Ketchimyaku

The article following this brief explanation is a transcript of the teaching given by Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett at Shasta Abbey in 1987, during the Ceremony of Following Where the Precepts, as the Blood of the Buddhas, Leads. This is one of the great ceremonies of the Keeping of the Ten Precepts Retreat (Jukai); the retreat during which trainees commit or re-affirm their commitment to following the Buddhist life and formally become Lay-Buddhists. During this particular ceremony, trainees voluntarily follow in the footsteps and path of the Celebrant. Dressed simply as a monk, wearing the monk's travelling hat and carrying bowl and staff, the Celebrant demonstrates by his or her path and steadfast movement the necessity of simply going on - doing our training to the best of our ability.

The procession thus winds its way to the Ceremony Hall where the Celebrant ascends the altar and is representative of the Cosmic Buddha. After the Celebrant's teaching, each trainee ascends the steps of the altar and receives the Blood-line certificate; the certificate that holds a graph with all the names of the successive Ancestors from the time of Shakyamuni to our Master of this present day. To this list the trainee's name has been added with room for other names to follow, thus signifying the necessity of passing on the Life of the Buddha - the necessity of endless training.

Emerging from an empty circle at the top of the graph and winding through this list of names runs a red line - the Blood of the Buddhas that unifies all beings. This red line returns to the empty circle signifying that all things emerge from the Eternal; and to the Eternal all things return. There is nothing outside of this compassionate embrace.

The following transcript appears here with the kind permission of the author Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett, Abbess. [Ed.]

Ketchimyaku: The Blood Line of the Buddhas

Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett, M.O.B.C.

The plum crested silk of the Ketchimyaku; the Blood Line of the Buddhas; the thread that runs through everyday life and eventually returns us to the Buddha; the thread that runs from yesterday to today and from today to tomorrow; and on into eternity, never turning back; the thread that is strong and vibrant so long as the Precepts are kept. Every year we learn more about those Precepts and how to return to the Eternal. We should know however, that it is not a going backwards but a going on. If it were going backwards there would be no need for the line from Master and disciple back to the Eternal: they would merely look back through each other. But this is a going on! This year we have learned much about the Precept concerning the Three Treasures. Do not defame the Three Treasures!

Perhaps one of the greatest gifts of all Buddhism is the learning of generosity of spirit for without it Buddhism does not live. Gratitude for the teaching, generosity of the spirit to all, no matter what may or may not have happened, the recognition of the law of karma which is inexorable; over which neither I nor you nor anyone else in this world has power, the fact that the consequences of actions are the consequences thereof and that no living person has the right to heap coals on the fires of hell; just the red line, going on, going on from yesterday to today and from today to tomorrow. To be a Buddhist is to keep the Precepts from one day to the next and make sure of the meaning of that keeping. It is to keep the red line strong, vibrant and flowing; one year to another, to another, on to eternity. Above all this year, let us learn generosity of spirit.

The keeping of the Precepts leads to peace within the heart, which leads to true joy, which leads to gratitude which is unbounded, which gives birth to

generosity of spirit and generosity of spirit gives birth to absolute trust. Never be fearful. Hold the red line. Feel the water of the spirit pour through you; to everyone around you and back to the Buddha and round and through and on. Never let yourself become clogged with self ideas and doubts, delusions; and above all, no matter what you witness or experience, always keep generosity of spirit before your eyes and in your heart.

* * *

The Keeping of the Ten Precepts Retreat at Throssel Hole Priory, 1988

Rev. Master Daishin Morgan was the Celebrant at the ceremony of Lay Ordination during the recent Keeping of the Ten Precepts Retreat at Throssel Hole Priory. We wish the following new Lay ordinees success in their commitment to Buddhist training and the precepts:

William Eric Rees Jones, Christopher David Watson, Ian Stuart White, Michael James Martin, Robert McGraw, Ross Gordon Elliott, Susan Elizabeth Gittins, Simon Owen Horobin, Sibylle Janert, Gillian Craig, Michael Alan Jones, Roel Christoph Knappstein, Virginia Joy Lee, Jessie Anastasia Leeman, Thalia Martin, Jacoba Antien Meiborg, David Morris, Maximiliaan Helena Schreurs, Lynne Heidi Stumpe, David William Thorne, William Robert Turner, Julius Welby, David Gerard Wilkinson, Shaun Perry Williams, Anthony Maynard Wraight.

The Threefold Lotus Scripture

Rev. Daishin Morgan, M.O.B.C

[This article and an occasional series of articles to appear in future issues are extracts from edited transcripts of a series of lectures recorded for the benefit of meditation groups. The translation used is The Threefold Lotus Sutra by Bunno Kato and W.E. Soothill et al., published by Weatherhill. Passages are quoted by kind permission of the copyright holders Rissho Kosei-kai. Readers are strongly advised to study this translation and not rely on these notes alone for a clear insight into this scripture. D.M.]

The Lotus Sutra has probably had a more profound influence upon those who practice Buddhism in the countries where Mahayana is taught than any other scripture. It is relatively short and easy to read and contains teaching for people of all stages of development. It was one of the scriptures spoken by the Buddha towards the end of His life and is considered by many to be the One-vehicle Law that surpasses all others, in that it is the most complete and profound of the Buddha's teachings. Within the tradition of Serene Reflection Meditation it is one of the central scriptures, as indeed it is of many other schools. Great Master Dogen refers to it frequently throughout his writings:

When we see the Lotus Sutra we will be overjoyed to see Shakyamuni Buddha, will we not? This is the living dimension of Shakyamuni Buddha. Those who receive, keep, read, chant, memorise, practise and copy this Lotus Sutra, with all their body and mind will without fail see Shakyamuni Buddha....Put deep faith in this Lotus Sutra.'

The twenty-fifth chapter, known as the Scripture of Avalokiteswara Bodhisattva, is chanted daily in Buddhist monasteries throughout China and Japan as well as at Shasta Abbey and here at Throssel Hole Priory. The scripture itself is regarded as one of the relics of the Buddha and is referred to as one of the Ten Buddhas invoked in several ceremonies, including the daily mealtime ceremonial, ordinations and funerals.

The scripture refers to a number of teachings and doctrines that would be helpful to discuss before investigating the scripture itself:

The Three Vehicles.

The doctrine of the three vehicles is referred to constantly throughout the scripture. The Buddha explains that not everyone is able to comprehend the highest truth directly and therefore they need to be led gently towards an understanding of the Bodhisattva ideal. To achieve this the Buddha uses skillful means in the form of tactful teachings that can be understood by all beings according to their level of development. The three vehicles can be viewed as stages through which the trainee passes on his or her way to Buddhahood. Were it not for these expedient teachings the way would seem unattainable, and beings of little faith would feel discouraged. The threefold division is an attempt to accomodate all beings of whatever capacity within the teaching. The three stages, or three vehicles, are called the Sravaka way, the Pratyekabuddha way and the Bodhisattva way.

The Sravaka way can best be described as the state of training wherein one is willing to listen to the teaching and attempt to live by the Precepts. This is the essential foundation, but there is more to training than this. One must be willing to become Buddha; it is not enough to settle for a backwater, a comfortable and safe kind of spirituality, as such a thing is an illusion. At this stage no real answer to the problem of birth and death has been found and one does not know for certain the existence of the Buddha

Nature, the Cosmic Buddha, and so one is still liable to be trapped on the wheel of suffering. It is said that Sravakas hear the teaching on the level of the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path and seek for the cessation of the cause of suffering for themselves alone.

The Pratyekabuddha has gone one step further than the Sravaka in that he is willing to venture out of his shell towards enlightenment. He recognises the necessity of knowing the Lord of the House, of transcending attachment and realising the Truth. Although a Pratyekabuddha is truly a seeker after enlightenment he has yet to develop the Bodhisattva mind. There is still the element of seeking for himself. This stage is well beyond where most Buddhists reach and is not to be denigrated. We all start out seeking for ourselves, but through doing so with an open heart we realise that there is no salvation for separate parts of the whole, there is only the enlightenment of all beings. All beings are a manifestation of the Eternal and are not, and never have been, separate. Pratyekabuddhas are said to study the twelve links in the chain of Dependent Origination and to seek enlightenment for themselves.

The Bodhisattva goes on beyond the human mind. He is willing to be the "dewdrop that slips into the shining sea."² All beings must start from where they are and approach the Truth from where they stand. The Bodhisattva is one who knows the Truth is beneath his feet. He can truly work for the salvation of others and make a reality of the vow not to enter enlightenment until he can take all beings with him. This should not be understood to mean that the Bodhisattva does not enter enlightenment -- he does, and he takes all beings with him. He then spends his life helping these beings come to the same realisation of where they truly are. The Bodhisattva goal can only be understood from the Eternal's view of the universe. The Bodhisattva strives to leave behind the worldly, dualistic view of reality and come to see that all is void, unstained and pure.

The enlightenment of the Bodhisattva is found within selfless service to all beings; far from having given up enlightenment, he is the living expression of it. He does however have further to go: "Oh Buddha, going, going, going on beyond, always going on beyond, always becoming Buddha."³

In addition to the three vehicles, the Buddha makes reference to the One Vehicle and states that in reality there is but One Vehicle. The other teachings are temporary expedients until the Buddha has revealed the final Truth. Put another way, one starts out with the expedient forms of the teachings and, through their efficacy, the ground is made ready to receive the knowledge of how things truly are -- the One Vehicle. When the way is viewed from the standpoint of this One Vehicle it becomes obvious that all vehicles are embedded within It; nothing is divided, excluded or looked down on.

The parables told by the Buddha in the early chapters of the Lotus Scripture graphically and clearly illustrate the importance of this teaching. The Parable of the Burning House and that of the Magic City reveal the tactful methods of the Buddha; the Parable of the Rich Man's Son shows how we fear to take up our true inheritance; and the Parable of the Herbs shows how the Buddha's compassion extends to all: the rain of the Dharma falls on all beings equally.

Whenever you come across a description of the different stages of training, there is a natural temptation to try to figure out what stage you are in. You must be willing to see the aspects of each of the three vehicles within yourself and place your faith in the power of training to take you even deeper; to realise the need to always be going on, to see where attachments are holding you back and to let go. In this way you will, in time, forget the self, live the life of practice and lack for nothing right now. I would advise against spending a lot of time trying to

figure out precisely where you are in this scheme of things; getting on with it is far more important.

The division of the Way into the three vehicles predates the division of Buddhism into Hinayana and Mahayana. Mahayana is the Great Vehicle, the Way that encompasses the Bodhisattva ideal and leads the trainee on to become one with the Eternal Life of the Tathagata; it is the Way expounded in the Lotus Scripture. The 'Hinayana' referred to in the text is a term used to describe the Way of those who have not yet aspired to the Bodhisattva ideal. Over the course of time the term Hinayana or lesser vehicle was applied to the Sravaka and Pratyekabuddha Vehicles. This term has been wrongly applied to those schools of Buddhism who look to the Pali scriptures as the source of their inspiration. The Theravada is the surviving school of this tradition and it would be arrogant to describe it as belonging to the lesser vehicle. There are plenty of trainees in the Buddhist traditions of China and Japan with a Hinayana outlook, and there are some within the Theravada with a Mahayana outlook; I say only some because Bodhisattvas are rare in any tradition. Dogmatic characterisations are not very helpful when applied to whole traditions. Instead it should be understood that the three vehicles are a description of various stages along the path, and the Sravaka is in no way inferior spiritually to the Bodhisattva in that both share equally in the Buddha Nature. The Sravaka has yet to develop the Bodhisattva mind but has no inherent limitations. However, a being who stubbornly clings to the Sravaka or Pratyekabuddha way, refusing to consider the existence of anything further or deeper, does get into serious difficulties as such blindness will impede progress and eventually lead to negative consequences.

It is with this latter difficulty that the Lotus Scripture is concerned. The Scripture makes it clear that Sravakas are part of the assembly who hear the Buddha preach, but they must not settle for only part of the teaching but go on to realise Buddhahood. In chapter two, those stubbornly clinging to the Sravaka

way leave the assembly when the Buddha proclaims that His teaching is more vast and profound than any Sravaka can comprehend. Instead of understanding this as a spur to go deeper, their pride gets in the way and they leave in a huff.

While discussing the question of Hinayana and Mahayana, I should point out that there are those who do not accept the Lotus Scripture as part of the authentic teachings of the Buddha since it does not appear in the Pali Canon. The response of the Mahayana schools to this is that the Buddha did not proclaim the deepest teachings to those who were not yet ready to hear them. As in chapter two, the unbelievers were allowed to depart. It is my personal belief that the Lotus Scripture is indeed the teaching of the Buddha. The universal and all-embracing nature of the teachings contained within it are the very characteristics of a Buddha. Without the statement of the Eternal Nature of Buddha contained in chapter sixteen, the teachings would be incomplete.

Prediction of Buddhahood.⁴

Since all beings possess the Buddha Nature, they will naturally realise their inherent Buddhahood by working to clear away the obstructing clouds of delusions. To reassure and encourage beings to believe and have faith in the teaching and rely upon their own inherent Buddha Nature, the Buddha predicts their full enlightenment. This takes place on numerous occasions throughout the scripture, starting with the Buddha's closest disciples and ending by embracing all beings.

The prediction of Buddhahood is an essential element in an individual's progress. There are a number of levels on which the prediction takes place. The first is by means of the Buddha laying His hand upon the disciple's head; the second, by stating that the disciple will become a Buddha; and the third by the Buddha revealing His unlimited nature, His glorious body, for the encouragement of the disciple.

The Buddha, through His direct descendant in the Transmission of the Precepts, places His hand upon the disciple's head during Lay Ordination, Monastic Ordination and the Transmission ceremonies. All of these ceremonies are concerned with recognising the inherent Buddha Nature of the individual; they are a pointing out and a confirmation of the Eternal within all beings. It is through the faith that is nurtured by such means that the disciple comes to hear the voice of the Eternal within his or her heart -- which is the second level, the hearing with the ear of the Truth, from the Eternal directly, that the Buddha is within all beings, including ourselves. The third level is the certainty of knowledge, the Eternal revealed. This third level is the flowing of the water of the spirit, the movement of the Blood of the Buddhas which courses through our being washing away the self and all delusion. Having grown faith through these intimations, the disciple is able to arrive at the place where he or she offers him or herself completely to the Eternal. At this point the disciple is able to see the glorious body of the Buddha. As a result of this experience the disciple's practice is greatly enhanced.

Where the prediction of Buddhahood is given in the Lotus Scripture, there are a number of elements that recur in most descriptions: Shakyamuni Buddha says of those whose Buddhahood is predicted that they will give homage to countless numbers of Buddhas, serving, revering and honouring them; and they will widely proclaim the One Vehicle; and in their final bodily state, they will become Buddha. The name of the Buddha-to-be is given and the Buddha-domain is named, as is the kalpa when the prediction will be fulfilled. The lifetime of the Buddha-to-be is stated and his Pure Land is described, as are all the Sravaka- and Bodhisattva-followers who will accompany him. It is often stated that the prediction will be fulfilled after infinite kalpas in the future.

Taking these elements in order, the first statement is that homage will be given to countless

Buddhas on the way to realisation. This means that one is constantly giving homage to the Buddha and to all forms of Buddha, serving, revering and honouring them. Treating all beings, all things, as Buddhas results in the purity of mind that is able to know the flowing of the Water of the Spirit and the prediction of Buddhahood. A kalpa is a very indeterminate length of time: it can be as long as it takes for a cubic mile of the hardest granite to be worn away by the touch of the garment of a heavenly maiden who passes it once every hundred years, or it can pass in an instant. The passing of kalpas, or even infinite kalpas, depends on the mind of the trainee. One's Buddhahood can seem a very long way off indeed if one gives way to doubt or despair or refuses to believe in one's Buddha Nature. Alternatively the flowing of the Water of the Spirit and the actualisation of the prediction can be realised in an instant, as is made clear in the twelfth chapter when an eight-year-old girl is able to realise Buddhahood instantly.

The one who receives the prediction is said to widely proclaim the One Vehicle because to receive the Water of the Spirit, and go on receiving it, one must give it to others, which is the true meaning of widely proclaiming the One Vehicle. One gives it to others by giving oneself completely to the life of practice, allowing oneself to become the instrument through which the Eternal transmits the Truth. The Water of the Spirit belongs to the Eternal, it is never our possession.

"In the final bodily state" means that when one allows the Water of the Spirit to wash away all clinging and delusion and one has cleansed the karma of this and previous lives, there will be no need or desire for rebirth. The wheel of suffering is broken and the cycle of births and deaths is ended forever. By dwelling in the fountain of the Water of the Spirit we are beyond the triple world. The name given to the Buddha who is to appear and the name given to the kalpa when He will appear, together with a description

of the Pure Land, give many clues to the nature of Buddhahood. For example we find in chapter six:

"Maha-kasyapa . . . in his final bodily state he will become a Buddha whose name will be called Radiance Tathagata, Worshipful, All Wise, Perfectly Enlightened in Conduct, Well Departed, Understander of the World, Peerless Leader, Guide, Teacher of Gods and Men, Buddha, World-honoured One, whose domain is named Radiant Virtue, and whose kalpa is named Great Magnificence . . . His domain will be beautiful, devoid of dirt, potsherds, thorns and unclean ordure; its land will be level and straight, with no uneven places, neither pitfalls nor mounds, its ground of lapis lazuli, lines of jewel trees, golden cords to bound the ways, strewn with precious flowers, and purity [reigning] everywhere. In that domain the bodhisattvas will be infinite thousands of kotis, with sravakas numberless. No Mara deeds will be there, and though there are Mara and Mara's people, they will all protect the Buddha-law."⁵

The abundant jewels are the virtues that result from purity of heart, the level land with no pitfalls refers to the lack of obstructions in the heart of the being who is truly one with great wisdom. Even Mara, the personification of that which tempts us to error, is here seen for what he is, the defender of Buddhism. Such descriptions of pure lands describe this world when it is seen with the eyes of a Buddha.

Women and Buddhahood.

The Lotus Scripture has been done a grave disservice by being misquoted by some commentators to justify their prejudice against women. I want to examine the main references to women and dispel the idea that this scripture is in any way anti-women.

Without doubt some commentators have misused the scripture to justify their opinions, but this should not be allowed to put people off. The Lotus Scripture is a profound statement of religious understanding. This understanding was naturally expressed in the language and cultural framework of India over 2000 years ago. We must be careful not to look at it with the kind of assumptions we would make had it been written today. Equally we must be careful not to try to make it appear as we would like it to.

The way to approach all teaching of the Buddha is to examine it in the light of fundamental principles. The foundation of the entire Mahayana is that all beings possess the Buddha Nature. There is that within all beings, male or female, that is of the Unborn, the Undying, the Uncreated. In fact all of existence is all that is seen of the Unborn. All that is, takes its existence purely within the Unborn, nothing is outside the Unborn, all is embraced within it. When looked at from this perspective it is clearly wrong to think that women, by virtue of their sex, are in some way limited in their approach to Buddhahood. It is unfortunate that this delusion has been perpetuated by some Buddhists; we must be very careful in the West to make sure we do not fall into this trap. In the social climate that exists today we have an unprecedented opportunity to lay this ghost once and for all; it would be a very grave mistake if this opportunity were to be missed.

In general those passages from the Lotus Scripture read by some as stating that women are in some spiritual sense inferior all have to do with entry into a Pure Land. Before we can go any further, it is necessary to understand what a Pure Land is. There are various interpretations made by different schools but some fundamental points can be made that are common. The first and most important point is that a Pure Land, by definition, is beyond the opposites of male and female. Lust and anger are not found there. These two poisons are rightly regarded as the two most serious impediments in the first three steps in

training. One does not overcome lust and anger until one has cleansed the karma of this and previous lives. That is to say, one must have resolved all tendency towards taking rebirth in this or any other realm. It is the point of spiritual rebirth, where the forces that brought a being into existence (i.e. their uncleansed balance of karma) have been exhausted by means of patient training and enlightenment. When these forces are extinguished, that which is left is Buddha Nature, still with work to be done, but a very much more purified being than before such rebirth took place. All the schools agree that such rebirth, the stage of a non-returner, coincides with the cleansing of the fetters of lust and anger. In terms of this study, rebirth in a Pure Land, whether in this or a future life, coincides with the cutting of all attachment to lust and anger.

Those beings who dwell in a Pure Land are Bodhisattvas, who are beyond the opposites of male and female. It has been customary to state that women must be reborn as men to enter this Pure Land. This is a very one-sided statement. All beings have to be reborn as Bodhisattvas, those who are beyond male or female. Men must be reborn as Bodhisattvas or, in the terms used in the scripture, men must be reborn as women.

Part of the confusion that exists surrounding this point comes from the mistaken idea that to be beyond lust a man must not have any contact with women. Consequently a deluded interpretation came about that, as men were in the Pure Land, women could not dwell there as well, otherwise the men would be subject to lust! Well if the men have not learned truly what it is to give up all attachment to lust then they have a problem they need to get on and deal with. Men can get dreadfully caught up in lust with no women present and vice versa. In the final analysis the presence or absence of the opposite sex has nothing to do with overcoming lust. Lust is cleansed with the willingness to let go of one's attachment to all that goes with sexuality. Only then can the whole business be left

behind leaving one free to know the Eternal, the Unborn.

Chapter ten, "A Teacher of the Law," states clearly that women can become teachers of the Law and should wear the robe of the Tathagata and enter the abode of the Tathagata. Chapter twelve goes further by making it plain that women can, and do, become Buddhas, for this chapter speaks of an eight-year-old girl who realises Buddhahood. The text states that this girl Bodhisattva is instantly transformed into a male on attaining perfect enlightenment.

Care must be taken here to interpret this correctly. A woman, on attaining Buddhahood, has gone beyond all opposites and is therefore no longer a woman but a Buddha. In equal measure, a man ceases to be a man and becomes a Buddha. It has been the convention to refer to the Buddha and Bodhisattvas with a male pronoun. This should be seen in no other way than the convention that all human beings are referred to as "mankind" -- the male element only being used because there is no neutral form.

This interpretation is the only correct one possible in the light of the basis of the Mahayana. To try to divide off women from the Pure Land, from Buddhahood or Bodhisattvaship, is to deny they have the Buddha Nature. Such a denial is a rejection of Buddhism.

That the Threefold Lotus Scripture takes this view is born out by chapter three of the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings. When the Buddha is expounding the merits of those who keep the teaching of this scripture, He refers to them as "good sons or good daughters." He makes it plain that, "these good sons or good daughters will attain the assurance of the law of no birth in their bodies of men or women by the merit of having been enlightened, etc. . . . and attain supreme Buddhahood before long."^e

This aspect will be explored further in the commentary on chapter eight, but I would like to point out that in chapter twenty-three of the Lotus Scripture it is stated that women who practise the teaching will be able to be born in the Pure Land of Amida and progress to Buddhahood without obstruction.

Down the centuries all great masters have been quite unequivocal on this point; for example Dogen states:

After all, universal emptiness is universal emptiness, the four elements are the four elements, and the five skandhas are the five skandhas; women are the same -- attaining the Way can be accomplished by both men and women. Moreover, we must equally respect both attainments of the Dharma. Do not be concerned with the differences between men and women. This is a basic principle of the supreme and wonderful Buddhist Way. In China, there are also laymen who have not renounced the world yet still devote themselves to Buddhism. There are single people and couples living in huts practising clean and pure lives in the midst of the dirt and pain of this world. Yet all of these people are trying to clarify the same things as masters who have become monks and gathered together to study, make prostrations and receive instruction. it makes no difference if they are men, women, or beasts. Those who have not seen the Buddhist Dharma even in their dreams -- and this includes hundred-year-old bhikkus -- cannot surpass laymen or women who have attained the Dharma. Still they simply bow to them as a host bows to his guest.

Anyone who practises and attains the Buddhist Dharma, even a girl of seven, will be the leader and compassionate father of all monks, nuns, lay people and sentient beings.

In [the Lotus Sutra] the daughter of a dragon king became Buddha. She should be venerated, honoured, and respected like all the Buddhas and Tathagatas. This is the ancient practice of the Buddhist Way. Those who do not know this and lack the right transmission are to be greatly pitied.⁷

The term "Law."

The use of the term "law" in this translation of the Threefold Lotus Sutra can mean one of a number of things according to the context. Law is a translation of the Sanskrit word Dharma. Readers will be familiar with this word as meaning the Buddha's teaching. This is its most common use as in the term "the Buddha's Law." It also has the wider meaning of thing, object or appearance in all of existence. In the Scripture of Great Wisdom the phrase "O Shariputra, here all things are pure" in the Sanskrit reads "all dharmas are pure." The two uses are in fact closely related on their deepest levels. According to the Mahayana all of existence is that which is seen of the Unborn, the Eternal. Each fragment, each atom of the universe contains the Buddha and is contained within the Buddha. All things, all atoms, all dharmas, therefore, when viewed correctly, show us something of the nature of the Eternal and as such are a form of teaching and so can be regarded as the Buddha's Law.

A further use of the term "Dharma" is in connection with the law of karma, the law of dependent origination and other such invariable laws. Whilst these laws are embraced within the Buddha's teaching, the term dharma is sometimes used specifically and strictly according to its etymological meaning of "unchanging character" or "truth."

The Threefold Lotus Sutra is made up of three separate scriptures that have traditionally been regarded as forming a cohesive whole. The first is the Scripture of Innumerable Meanings. The second is the Lotus Scripture itself which will form the basis of

future articles, and the third is known as the Sutra of Meditation on the Bodhisattva Universal Virtue.

It is well worth getting your own copy and reading the part of the scripture that is covered by each article. Should you decide to do this, I would like to say something about how the copy of the scripture should be treated. Traditionally in Buddhist monasteries, especially those in China, a special hall is built where the scriptures are kept. Before being allowed to study them the student must offer incense and make three full bows to the scripture before opening it. Today we can just walk into a shop and buy a copy, and so we tend to lose the mind of gratitude and respect that is essential. One should venerate the scripture itself, handle it with the greatest care as the religious object it truly is. It should never be written on or defaced in any way, nor should your copy be left lying about. The above of course applies to all scriptures and not just to the Lotus Scripture. If today in the West we cannot manage to have a special scripture hall we can at least reserve a specially clean section of a bookcase in which to keep such treasures. I personally find it helpful to have a small incense burner near where the scriptures are kept in my room so I can offer incense before reading from them. With this kind of mind you can really hear the Lotus Scripture, you can take your place with the Sangha on Vulture Peak and know that you are in the presence of the Eternal Buddha, who is forever proclaiming this scripture.

* * *

Notes

1. Great Master Dogen, Shobogenzo [The Eye and Treasury of the True Law], trans. Kosen Nishiyama and John Stevens, 4 vols. (Tokyo: Nakayama Shobo, 1977), Vol. 2, p. 114.

2. Sir Edwin Arnold, The Light of Asia (Wheaton, Ill: Theosophical Publishing House, 1969), p. 154.
3. The Scripture of Great Wisdom.
4. For a detailed explanation, see Great Master Dogen, Shobogenzo, Vol 1, "Juki" chapter, p. 73. Also Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett has given her commentary on the "Juki," "Predition of Buddhahood" chapter in a taped lecture available from the Abbey or the Priory.
5. Bunno Kato and W. E. Soothill et al., trans., The Threefold Lotus Scripture (New York: Weatherhill, 1975), pp. 135-136.
6. Ibid., pp. 23-24.
7. Dogen, Shobogenzo, Vol. 2, p. 162.

The New Meditation Hall



Since its founding in 1972 by Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett, the Abbess and Spiritual Director of Shasta Abbey and the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives, the monastic and lay Sangha of Throssel Hole Priory have grown both physically and spiritually.

Our lay congregation has grown steadily with the organising of many meditation groups all over Britain, the developing of the Lay Ministry programme and the steady attendance at and support of the Priory itself. We have been slowly updating the original farm buildings and have built a large Ceremony Hall which doubles as the Meditation Hall for the lay trainees. The building of new, warm and bright dining and common room facilities have added greatly to the comfort of all.

As mentioned in the previous issue our latest project, the monks new Meditation Hall, has recently reached completion. The old converted barn which had

served admirably for so long became no longer safe nor functional with encroaching damp and structural problems, and the community exerted much effort last year demolishing and re-constructing this important monastic building. With much of the most urgent building work now finished we are glad to be able to devote more time to the more usual monastic schedule and lay programme, and it is with great joy and gratitude that the monks have now moved into their new Meditation Hall.

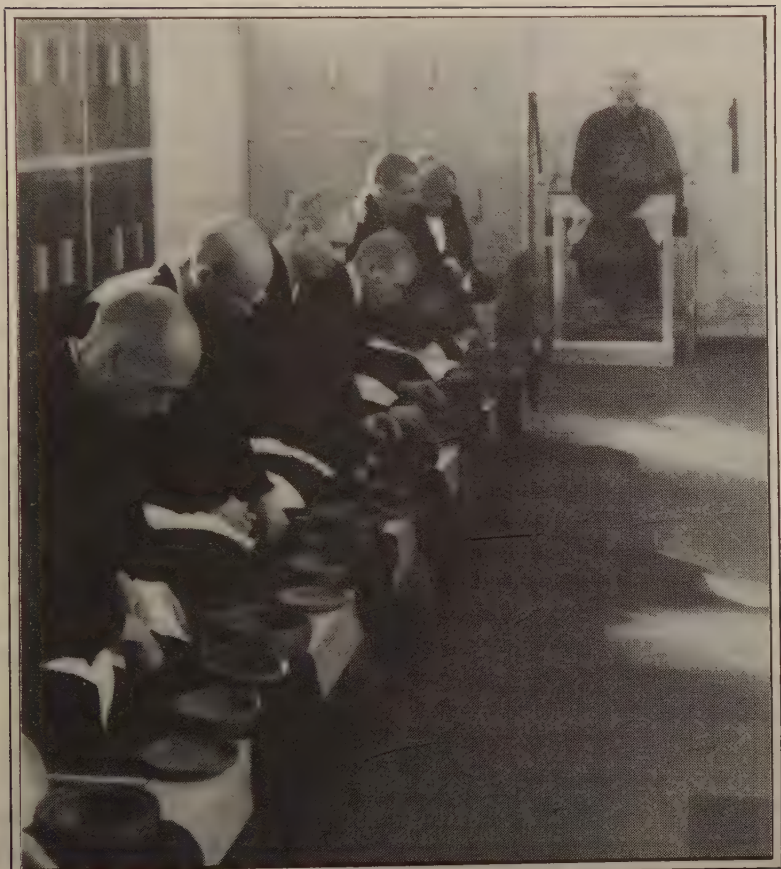


A statue of Manjusri Bodhisattva (Gentle Glory or Shining Lord who personifies Wisdom) has been sculpted by one of the monks and is installed upon the Hall's main altar. Manjusri Bodhisattva, the embodiment of Great Wisdom and thus of meditation, is the statue or image to be traditionally found in meditation halls, libraries and study rooms. He is our own ability to dwell within and live from our inherent completeness and perfection.

The lion-beast throne upon which Manjusri sits is the beast of 'self' which must be gently but firmly tamed through the practice of meditation and the keeping of the Precepts. Manjusri and His beast are not separate. That which thinks it lacks looks with doleful eyes to that which knows it does not. Carrying neither whip nor bag of treats Manjusri just sits in eternal meditation. In this way the beast is tamed and conquered by its own longing to live in harmony with the pure love that flows from Manjusri's heart.

The windows of the Meditation Hall are decorated with 'glass-stained' images of twelve Bodhisattvas and protectors of Buddhism whose example serves to guide us in our training; these include Avalokiteswara, the Four Guardian Kings, Ananda, Ksitigarbha and Maitreya amongst others. Each 'saint' or Bodhisattva stands or sits in a lotus within a Dharma-cloud set in the vast heavenly sea of lotuses, thus reminding all trainees that their true sitting place is within this all embracing, compassionate 'sea'.





The Meditation Hall is the heart of the monastery and it is traditional for the monks of the Serene Reflection Meditation tradition (J. Soto Zen) to meditate, sleep and eat at their own sitting place. This is especially helpful in the early years of a monk's life when one can truly benefit from the spiritually focused and uncomplicated life within the Hall. Each monk has a space upon one of the meditation platforms that are located around the Hall. Cupboards are provided at one end of each space to hold bedding and a few personal possessions. At the other end is a narrow ledge of polished wood that runs the length of the platform: the 'pure place' upon which the trainees spread their bowl sets at meal times. The 'pure place' is treated with great dignity

and respect for it is symbolic of our inherent Buddha Nature which we must always cherish.

Each activity and movement within the Hall is designed to help the trainee to look within and find and live from the heart of compassion, love and wisdom. Lay trainees who wish to practice Buddhist training in the context of their daily life are welcomed and can benefit greatly from sharing in the more intensive contemplative life of the monastery. As many of the helpful forms as possible are shared by our lay members within the Ceremony Hall and dining room and will already be familiar to many of you. We hope that the implementing of more of the traditional monastic forms will not only help deepen the expression of practice and training of the monks but will also enrich the practice of the lay Sangha. By being given the opportunity to be still we are all of us more able to deal with and express the Truth within the busy activities of our daily life, whether within the monastery or in the world. Thus, "The means of training are thousand-fold, but pure zazen must be done."

Once again we thank all of you who have contributed so generously with both time and funds to help bring this project to a succesful conclusion and we look forward with joy and vigour to this new phase of the Priory's growth.

* * *

Training on the Dole

Stephen Watson

As a student I was overjoyed to find that my academic work could be part of my Buddhist training - a form of working meditation. I have been unemployed now for six months and this experience has caused me to change my attitude towards working meditation and training in general. Because of my conditioning I had many preconceptions about what it meant to be working or 'doing something.' These attitudes have tended to limit my approach to Buddhist training and had undermined the faith that real training could be done in whatever circumstances I found myself.

Although I had heard that almost any activity could be a form of working meditation, I had not fully grasped what this meant in daily life. I still believed that those who caught the bus into work every morning were doing 'real' work. Those who stayed at home checking the paper for jobs and tidying the house were somehow second-rate. For some reason I had also come to believe that the routine of work with its set goals and timetable was an essential part of training. My initial reaction to unemployment was to try and set myself a rigid schedule of things to do and force myself to stick to it. I took refuge in frantic activity. After several weeks of dashing about doing various kinds of voluntary work and looking for jobs I found myself feeling tense and irritable. I sat with these feelings and realized that I had never asked in meditation whether it was *good* to do all of these things, I had simply assumed I had to 'do something.' Although the voluntary work was fine in itself my attitude of mind was wrong.

The feeling that 'you must do something to justify your existence' seems to be a common experience of those who are out of work. I have found that the result of acting on this sense of inadequacy is always

more tension and suffering. For example, I remember on several occasions I cleaned the house until it sparkled and then waited around, hoping that someone would show some appreciation for what I had done. I found that the expected praise didn't really satisfy my desperate need to feel useful. In acting in this way I was simply making myself dependent on others and creating more suffering for myself. The Precept "do only good" has never been so important to me as it is now. Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett has written in her commentary on this Precept:

Do not do anything unless it is 'good;' do not do anything unless you have first asked the Lord of the House if it is good for you to do it. Do nothing whatsoever in a hurry; . . .

It is so easy to feel under pressure from the D.H.S.S., other people or from your own feelings of guilt when you are unemployed, but the Precepts point us back to the true source of activity - meditation - and provide us with a compassionate source to act from when faced with external pressures. By sitting still it can be seen, however briefly, that the things that seem to be putting us under so much unnecessary pressure are not really so important. Once this has been seen it is as if a space opens up around us and it is then possible to act without fear.

When circumstances provide us with a lot of time to ourselves it is easy to react with fear and try to fill up the empty space ahead of us with all sorts of plans. Of course it is necessary to plan ahead in some situations, but I have often found myself constantly trying to work out what I should be doing tomorrow and the next day etc., until it has become a real burden. I am beginning to learn from the example of other trainees in similar situations that a more flexible approach to life can be a more helpful response to being out of work. If we are meditating regularly and keeping the Precepts in our daily life we do not have to slide towards lethargy. To let go of attempts to rigidly organise our lives is indeed an act of

courage. It requires us to trust that we will know what to do tomorrow, that we are indeed capable of dealing with whatever comes along.

Many people experience feelings of inadequacy when they are without work and I have found this true of myself. I don't believe that unemployment in itself is the cause of the sense of failure, but rather it is like a trigger that releases feelings that need to be dealt with from deep within. If we are not careful we can believe that we are indeed unworthy, however I have always been taught by the monks at the Priory that the arising of such negative feelings can be a great opportunity if we are willing to do something about them. By being still and seeing them for what they are we can learn to let go of them and trust the true refuge within our hearts. We can see just how hollow are our attempts to justify our existence by external means.

If we truly look we can see that a great teaching is being given here: that there is no other refuge but the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Seen from this perspective, being unemployed is just another opportunity to take a look at the areas in which we are clinging to the opinions and ideals that lead to suffering, and then to choose to act from the heart of faith.

* * *

NEWS

Monastic Events: On May 26th. our postulants Jennifer Bryceson and Janet Crookall-Greening were ordained by Rev. Master Daishin Morgan. Jenny received the name Houn Adelin (Noble Heart of the Dharma Cloud) and Jan became Houn Olwen (Pure Way of the Dharma Cloud). We warmly welcome Houn Adelin and Houn Olwen into our growing monastic family and wish them every success in their training.

This Spring we were pleased to welcome back Rev. Master Daishin Morgan and Rev. Fuden Nessi from their short visits to Shasta Abbey. We are grateful for the opportunity to visit Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett and our fellow trainees there, and thank them for their example and hospitality.

Festival Ceremonies: On Sunday April 17th. we celebrated the Festival Memorial for Great Master Keizan. Great Master Keizan was the founder of Soji-ji, one of the two head-temples of the Soto Zen school in Japan, and he is remembered in gratitude for his work in bringing to life the Buddha's teaching through his deep understanding and use of ceremonial. Together with Great Master Dogen, who brought Soto Zen from China to Japan, Great Master Keizan is one of the most important ancestors in our lineage.

"He sought to explain the Truth to all by making a ceremony of everyday life so that every action, whether a seemingly ceremonial or worldly one, should have a heavenly meaning."

The Festival of the Buddha's Birth was celebrated at the Priory on May 8th. In addition to the resident community over 50 adults and 16 children joined in the celebration. The children enjoyed making paper lotus flowers. These were later offered at the pavilion of the Baby Buddha during a joyous and moving ceremony. A delicious informal buffet lunch was then enjoyed by all.

"His three hundred sermons are for us as rain is for trees and grass. Just as rain causes drooping flowers to flourish, so His words touch our heavy hearts. At this very moment the rain of the Dharma pours into the Lake of Kindness. The merit of His life may be likened to the wind which, as it bends the grass and fans the leaves, blows the good seed of the Dharma to take root in the hearts of people all over the world even after two thousand years and will continue to do so not only in this world but also in the next. We, the followers of our Great Master Shakyamuni, bow in gratitude to Him for His goodness and compassion as we celebrate His birthday."



From the offertory of the Festival ceremony of the Buddha's Birth.

Funerals and Memorials: The funeral ceremony and burial of Tan Tai Vi took place in Nottingham on the 27th. April. A memorial ceremony was also held for his wife Yen Chi La who had died during the preceeding week. Both were part of the Vietnamese community there and we were privileged and glad to be able to be of assistance to our fellow Buddhists.

A funeral and burial of Peter Hon Ming Yuen also took place in Huddersfield on the 20th. May. During a funeral ceremony of the Serene Reflection Meditation school, those who have died receive the Precepts and are ordained and embraced into the Sangha. This is the greatest gift and highest respect that can be offered. We extend our deepest sympathy to the relatives and friends of the deceased.

Memorial services were also held for Anna Van der Marel and Robbie McLean.

Other ceremonies: On the 30th. April the wedding took place at the Priory of David Stewart MacDonald and Elizabeth Anne Kemp. Our best wishes go to David and Elizabeth.

Lay Ministry News: We are pleased to announce that on April 5th., during the Keeping of the Ten Precepts retreat, Mies Hartoungh-Dewez from Holland was named a Lay Minister by Rev. Master Daishin. We congratulate Mies and wish her success in her continuing training and deepening of commitment.

Retreat News: This Spring, as well as the busy schedule of events at the Priory, public talks and retreats were held at Exeter, Edinburgh, Cardiff, Lancaster, Cambridge, Stourbridge and Chesterfield. Forthcoming events include a public talk on Friday 16th. September followed by a day retreat on Saturday 17th. at Aberdeen.

Two week-long retreats and two sesshins will be held this at the Priory this summer:-

Week Retreats: July 4-10 and August 8-14

With their emphasis more on the maintenance of steady progress in meditation the week retreats are less intensive than the Sesshins, but through having smaller groups for classes and other teaching, a more intimate atmosphere can be created in which to explore topics of particular interest to participants. The practical application of the Teaching will be given prominence whilst maintaining a strong emphasis on formal meditation.

Sesshins: July 18-24 and August 20-27

Sesshin translates as searching the Heart. It is an opportunity to go deeply into Meditation in a more intensive way than is usually possible in one's regular daily practice. This is reflected in the longer periods of time spent in doing formal zazen and

the much reduced work periods. Guidance in the form of lectures and the opportunity for personal instruction will be offered.

For more information on any of the listed retreats and events and our full calendar of retreats and ceremonies, please write or phone The Guestmaster, Throssel Hole Priory, Carrshield, Hexham, Northumberland NE47 8AL. Unless necessary, we request that business calls are not made on Sunday afternoons or Mondays, as we are able to deal with them more fully during the other days of the week.

Congregation Day in Birmingham and Summer Family Camp

We would like to remind our congregation members, their families and friends, of the 'congregation day' to be held in Birmingham on September 24th. The Festival of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva is to be celebrated on this day, and as in previous years, this will be an excellent opportunity for our members and friends to meet for a relaxed day together.

Another less formal occasion will be the summer family camp to be held at the Priory on July 29th., when in particular, children will be welcomed to renew old friendships, make new ones and join in with the cheerful and informal programme. For more information on these two events please contact David and Karen Richards, 82, Witten Street, Norton, Stourbridge, West Midlands DY8 3YE (Tel: 0384-373301) enclosing a stamped, addressed envelope please.

Donations Received: We would like to thank Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett for a beautiful Ksitigarbha statuette for the Priory car, and for the gift of an altar lamp. We are also grateful for the many donations that help keep the Priory supported. These have included fabric for making monks vestments, flowers for the altars, and safety equipment for the many work projects.

The warm and sunny weather this Spring has helped the garden to flourish and we are grateful for the

many shrubs and cuttings that help brighten the Priory grounds.

Other donations have included table cloths, books, socks, shaving mirrors, kitchen and garden equipment, weighing scales, a pillow, varnish and dog treats.

The kitchen and trainees also benefitted from the many donations of varied and delicious foods.

Donations Requested: The Kitchen would be grateful for a 5-gallon stainless steel cooking pot and for other stainless steel pots of various sizes. Donations of honey are always welcome for use with the many and varied recipes.

A tuning fork with the note 'F', and pitch pipes suitable for use with a choir are requested, as well as 'silk' flowers of all seasons for the altars, and dress making scissors.

"I have read the donor's reasons for his/her offering and I call upon the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to witness its sincerity for they are endowed with holy eyes which can see beyond both self and other."

From the Meal-time Ceremonial.



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Since I attained buddhahood,
The kalpas through which I have passed
Are infinite thousands of myriads
Of kotis of asamkhyeya years.
Ceaselessly preached I the Law and taught
Countless kotis of creatures
To enter the Way of the Buddha;
Since then are unmeasured kalpas.
In order to save all creatures,
By tactful methods I reveal nirvana,
Yet truly I am not [yet] extinct
But forever here preaching the Law.
I forever remain in this [world],
Using all my spiritual powers
So that all perverted creatures,
Though I am near, yet fail to see me.
All looking on me as extinct
Everywhere worship my relics,
All cherishing longing desires,
And beget thirsting hearts of hope.
[When] all creatures have believed and obeyed,
In [character] upright, in mind gentle,
Wholeheartedly wishing to see the Buddha,
Not caring for their own lives,
Then I with all the Sangha
Appear together on the Divine Vulture Peak.
And then I tell all creatures
That I exist forever in this [world],
By the power of tactful methods
Revealing [myself] extinct and not extinct.
[If] in other regions there are beings
Reverent and with faith aspiring,
Again I am in their midst
To preach the supreme Law.

From the Threefold Lotus Sutra

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